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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 002548

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STATE FOR NEA/ARPI

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SUBJECT: IRANIAN NSA VISITS KUWAIT, CALLS FOR AMERICAN
'CHANGE OF TONE'

REF: A. KUWAIT 2485

[B](#). KUWAIT 1884

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary and Comment: Following a number of official exchanges, the Secretary General of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Dr. Hassan Rouhani, visited Kuwait June 4-6, during which he held a series of meetings reportedly focusing on security cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Despite Rouhani's insistence that he was not carrying a specific message for the United States, the visit came shortly before Prime Minister Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah's planned July visit to Washington and Rouhani's public comments did include analysis of the U.S.-Iranian relationship. During a press conference on June 6, Rouhani said that Iran would be willing to cooperate further with the U.S. "if America changes its tone toward us." In addition, he uncharacteristically downplayed the suggestion that Israeli pressure is behind tensions between the U.S. and Kuwait. Rouhani also rejected the notion that Iran's nuclear activities posed a threat to the region, saying development of peaceful nuclear technology was Iran's right. End Summary and Comment.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Following closely behind the late-May visit of Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mohamed Reza Asefi and a flurry of official Kuwaiti delegations to Iran over the past three months, Iran's Supreme National Security Council Secretary General, Dr. Hassan Rouhani, visited Kuwait June

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4-6. In meetings with Prime Minister Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, National Assembly Speaker Jassem Al-Khorafi and Interior Minister Shaykh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, Rouhani reportedly discussed security cooperation in the fight against terrorism, the ongoing dispute over the continental shelf and the Dorra gasfield. (Note: Kuwait dispatched a team of negotiators to Tehran this week to discuss the next steps on the recently inked gas deal (ref. B). End Note.).

Peaceful Nukes Iranian Right

[1](#)3. (U) Upon arrival in Kuwait, Rouhani defended Iran's nuclear activity, stating that Iran had right to develop peaceful nuclear technology. Claiming that this activity was being conducted in coordination with three European nations and under the supervision of the IAEA, Rouhani said that Iran was one of the first countries in the region to have called for complete nuclear disarmament, starting with Israel. In response to questions about the Ambassador's May 25 speech (ref. A), Rouhani surmised that the remarks, which he referred to as "nonsense," were meant as a response to Muslim outrage over reports of Qur'anic desecration at Guantanamo Bay.

U.S. Change Could Further Cooperation

[1](#)4. (U) During a June 6 press conference, Rouhani made conciliatory remarks towards the U.S. Responding to a question about possible American attacks on Iran, Rouhani said he hoped "America will work for peace and stability of the region," but noted Iran was "well-prepared for any aggression." He added that if the U.S. would change its "language of threats and end sanctions they imposed on Iranian interests....I believe new conditions will prevail in relations between Iran and America." In addition, Rouhani downplayed the suggestion that U.S. policy towards Iran was the result of Israeli pressure. "All the messages we get from the U.S. through several parties did not mention Israel" he said, adding that America's position on Iran could be influenced by the "Zionist lobby."

Al-Qaeda Suspects to be Tried in Iran

[1](#)5. (U) Touching briefly on the issue of Al-Qaeda in Iran, Rouhani said the Iranian government has arrested 500 members of the organization, repatriating some and jailing others on charges of committing crimes against Iranian national security. He said the remaining Al-Qaeda members in Iran

would be tried in Iranian courts.

16. (C) Liberal columnist and head of the National Democratic Movement, Dr. Ahmed Bishara, told Poloff June 8 that Rouhani's visit was meant to replace that of President Khatami, whose office had indicated he would visit Kuwait in the near future. Bishara criticized the visit of Rouhani, whom he deemed too controversial (for his involvement as a lead Iranian negotiator with the IAEA) and too low-ranking to be received by PM Sabah.

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